

Definitions *

Bisexual — (female or male) a person who is (or can be) attracted emotionally, romantically and sexually to both males and females. Individuals can be attracted to either sex equally or to one more than the other.

Cross-dresser — Men and women who enjoy wearing the clothes of and appearing as the other gender. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals can be cross-dressers, though the majority of cross-dressers are heterosexual men. (Cross-dresser replaces the outdated term “transvestite”)

Gay Male — A male who is attracted emotionally, romantically and sexually to males.

Gender Identity — One’s inner sense of gender as male, female, transgender, androgynous, etc.

Genderqueer — A term used to create expressions of gender and identity that transcend binary male/female constructs

Gender Roles — What one’s society and culture says that ‘males and ‘females are like. The socially constructed and culturally specific behavior and appearance expectations imposed on females (femininity) and males (masculinity).

Heterosexism — The institutionalized assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior to and preferable to homosexuality or bisexuality.

Heterosexuals — Males and females who are attracted emotionally, romantically and sexually to members of the opposite sex. They are sometimes also referred to as “straight”.

Homophobia — The irrational fear or hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behavior.

Homosexuals — Males and females who form emotional, romantic, and erotic relationships with members of the same sex. Also referred to as gay or lesbian.

Internalized Homophobia — The experience of shame, aversion or self-hatred in reaction to one’s own attraction’s to a person of the same sex.

Intersex — An intersexed person is someone born with ambiguous genitalia, or with both male and female internal and/or external reproductive organs (Intersex replaces the outdated term “hermaphrodites”)

Lesbian — A female who is attracted emotionally, romantically and sexually to females.

Sexual Behavior — Sexual acts individuals of any orientation may choose to participate in with a partner or alone.

Sexual Minority — Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people (5 to 15% of the population depending upon the study).

Sexual Orientation — Defined by who you are ATTRACTED to emotionally, romantically and sexually: people of the same gender (lesbian, gay), the other gender (heterosexual), or either gender (bisexual). Note that these dimensions are not absolutes and can be somewhat fluid over time.

Transgender — A broad term used to describe the continuum of individuals whose gender identity and expression, to varying degrees, does not correspond with the social or cultural norms or expectation of their genetic sex.

Transsexual — An individual who presents him/her/hirself and lives as a gender different to his/her/ze genetic sex at birth. Transsexuals may identify as heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual. (note: “hir” and “ze” are gender neutral pronouns and do not denote gender as male or female).

* adapted from *Tackling Gay Issues in School, (GLSEN, CT)*

Note: Language continues to evolve both around gender and orientation. Feedback and discussion regarding the definitions above are welcome. Please call True Colors at: 888-565-5551 or use our website: www.OurTrueColors.org